

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8697

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EPAP, BC

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA BEEF EXPORTS

REF: GABORONE 0446 AND PREVIOUS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN SEPTEMBER 15 MEETING WITH EMBOFF, ECONOMIC ADVISER TO THE PRESIDENT, ROBERT DEAN, DISCUSSED CURRENT BOTSWANA-EEC BEEF SITUATION, BROACHED QUESTION OF BOTSWANA BEEF EXPORTS TO THE US AND REQUESTED EMBASSY'S ASSISTANCE IN SETTING UP MEETING BETWEEN BOTSWANA BEEFTEAM AND APPROPRIATE US COMMERCIAL AUTHORITIES. DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE REQUESTED. END SUMMARY.

2. DEAN NOTED THAT AGREEMENT WITH EEC PROVIDING FOR IMPORTATION OF BOTSWANA BEEF WILL EXPIRE IN DECEMBER AND SAID THAT HE AND MESSRS. MADISA AND NIELSEN (PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND GENERAL MANAGER, BOTSWANA MEAT COMMISSION) WERE OFF TO BRUSSELS THAT AFTERNOON IN EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE A NEW AGREEMENT. HE WOULD NOT SPECULATE ON OUTCOME OF TALKS, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT BEEF RELATIONSHIP WITH EEC LEFT MUCH TO BE DESIRED.

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3. THE FIRST PROBLEM WAS THAT THE GERMANS HAD THREATENED TO

BLACKBALL BOTSWANA MEAT IMPORTS INTO EEC IF THE NORTHERN ABATTOIR WERE BUILT. EEC POLICY DEMANDED UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT ON VETERINARY QUESTIONS. ALTHOUGH THE UK AND OTHER MEMBERS SUPPORTED THE ABATTOIR PROJECT, THE GERMANS HAD NOT YET BUDGED FROM THEIR NEGATIVE POSITION. DEAN HOPED THAT NOVEMBER VISIT TO BOTSWANA OF AN EEC TEAM OF GERMAN VETERINARIANS WOULD IMPROVE THE SITUATION.

4. SECOND DIFFICULTY AROSE FROM THE FACT THAT THE 1972 LOME CONVENTION WHICH PROVIDED GUIDELINES FOR MEAT IMPORTATION AGREEMENTS WAS TOO RESTRICTIVE, I.E. THE SEVEN PERCENT ANNUAL INCREASE CLAUSE WOULD BE INOPERATIVE WHENEVER EEC SAFEGUARD MEASURES WERE IN EFFECT (WHICH THEY ALWAYS ARE); TOO, ALTHOUGH THE TREATY PROVIDED FOR THE RELIEF OF DUTIES, IT DID NOTHING TO DECREASE LEVIES WHICH, ACCORDING TO DEAN, ARE PROHIBITIVELY HIGH. THE LEVY QUESTION WOULD BE THE CENTRAL QUESTION DURING THE NEGOTIATION IN BRUSSELS.

5. FINALLY, DEAN CONSIDERED THAT BECAUSE TURNOVER OF EEC OFFICIALS AT END OF 1976 WOULD BE HIGH, THE BRUSSELS TALKS WOULD BE CONDUCTED WITH OUTGOING OFFICIALS. IN THE EVENT OF A POSITIVE OUTCOME FOR BOTSWANA, HE HOPED THAT THE INCOMING OFFICIALS WOULD AGREE WITH WHAT THEIR PREDECESSORS HAD DONE.

6. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, DEAN SAID THAT THE RECENT VISIT TO BOTSWANA BY EEC MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE PERMANENT SECRETARY PETER WYNMAALEN HAD LEFT THE VISITOR WITH AN INCREASED APPRECIATION OF THE FACT THAT THE EXPORTATION OF BOTSWANA BEEF TO THE EEC WAS NOT ONLY A COMMERCIAL PROBLEM BUT AN ECONOMIC-SOCIAL-AND-POLITICAL ONE AS WELL. HE BELIEVED THAT WYNMAALEN WOULD HELP BOTSWANA ALL HE COULD.

7. REITERATING THAT THE SUCCESSFUL EXPORTATION OF BEEF WAS CRUCIAL TO BOTSWANA'S SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, DEAN BROACHED THE IDEA OF EXPORTING BETWEEN 2,500 AND 5,000 TONS OF BOTSWANA BEEF TO THE UNITED STATES. HE CONSIDERED THAT IF THE AMERICANS BUILT, DESIGNED AND FINANCED THE NORTHERN ABATTOIR (AS WAS ORIGINALLY PLANNED WITH AN AID LOAN) AND THEN, IN ADDITION, IMPORTED MEAT FROM IT, ANY EEC PROBLEM WITH THE ABATTOIR WOULD DISAPPEAR BECAUSE US VETERINARY STANDARDS WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIGH. TOO, EXPORTS TO THE US WOULD HELP RELIEVE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMIC PRESSURES ON BOTSWANA, I.E. CONTRARY TO THEIR CUSTOMS AGREEMENT, THE RSA REJECTED BOTSWANA MEAT SHIPMENTS IN ORDER TO IMPORT MORE RHODESIAN MEAT. TO DO THIS, THE RSA HAD COOKED UP UNNECESSARILY HIGH VETERINARY INSPECTION STANDARDS TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST BOTSWANA BEEF. IN SHORT, THE SOUTH AFRICAN MARKET WAS PRECARIOUS AT BEST. IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE, DEAN SAID THAT WERE THE US TO BEGIN IMPORTATION,

THE BEST GRADES, WHICH ARE PRESENTLY EARMARKED FOR THE RSA, WOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE U.S.

8. DEAN REQUESTED EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN SETTING UP A MEETING, POSSIBLY A NEGOTIATION, BETWEEN THE BOTSWANA "BEEF TEAM" AND APPROPRIATE U.S. COMMERCIAL OFFICIALS. THE BEEFTEAM PLANNED TO ATTEND THE AMERICAN MEAT ASSOCIATION CONVENTION IN CHICAGO. THEREFORE, DEAN THOUGHT THE TALKS COULD TAKE PLACE DURING THE LAST WEEK OF OCTOBER OR THE SECOND WEEK OF NOVEMBER. DEAN SAID HE WOULD APPRECIATE SOME RESPONSE FROM THE EMBASSY BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

9. COMMENT:

(A) BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY, PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EEC DO NOT APPEAR BRIGHT. EEC REPRESENTATIVE TO THE BLS COUNTRIES, MR. ANDERSON, TOLD EMBASSY DURING AUGUST VISIT TO GABORONE, THAT THE EEC WOULD LIKELY LET AGREEMENT LAPSE IN DECEMBER, INASMUCH AS SOME MEMBERS STRONGLY FELT THAT IT CONTRADICTED THE MARKETS COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY. GERMAN CHARGE' REGENHARDT TOLD EMBASSY SEPTEMBER 14 THAT HE WAS NOT CONFIDENT ABOUT POSITIVE OUTCOME OF TALKS, ADDING PESSIMISTICALLY THAT EVEN THE PRESENT AMOUNT TO EEC OF 15,000 TONS ANNUALLY WAS NOT HIGH ENOUGH TO YIELD PROFITS FOR GOB. FINALLY, VISITING EEC SECRETARY WYNMAALEN'S REMARKS, PRINTED IN LOCAL NEWS OF SEPTEMBER 8, WERE NOT PROMISING. HE REFERRED TO THE DECEMBER EXPIRATION OF THE AGREEMENT WITH BOTSWANA, AND POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD COME, THEREFORE, "TO FIND OUT WHAT PROBLEMS THE COUNTRY WOULD HAVE IF THIS KIND OF ARRANGEMENT DID NOT CONTINUE".

(B) GOB IS STRUGGLING TO KEEP OPEN THE FOREIGN OUTLETS FOR ITS MOST IMPORTANT NATIONAL PRODUCT. INASMUCH AS BOTSWANA IS A NATION COMPOSED ALMOST ENTIRELY OF SMALL CATTLE FARMERS, OUTCOME OF EFFORTS COULD HAVE GREAT IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. OBVIOUSLY, US WILLINGNESS TO IMPORT BOTSWANA BEEF AT THIS UNCERTAIN TIME WOULD HAVE SUBSTANTIAL AND FAVORABLE POLITICAL IMPACT. EMBASSY STRONGLY URGES THAT USG GIVE GOB REQUEST SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION AS ONE MEANS OF BACKING OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY TANGIBLE ACTION.

(C) ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE BY END OF SEPTEMBER AS TO WHETHER US INTERESTED IN INVESTIGATING POSSIBILITIES OF IMPORTING BOTSWANA BEEF. IF SO, REQUEST DEPARTMENT SUGGEST TIME AND LOCATION FOR TALKS WITH BEEFTEAM AND INFORM OF PROBABLE COMPOSITION OF THE US DELEGATION.

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